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## **Achilles Stretching Program**

A tight achilles, or more commonly a tight gastrocnemius (the large muscle of the calf), can lead to multiple foot problems.

Sometimes the pressure is bad enough to require surgery. However initially a routine stretching program is recommended.

There are several principles to follow with a stretching program. The most important is actually doing the stretching - several times a day, everyday. Also important is to maintain appropriate posture (form). You should be able to feel the stretch as you are doing it. See next page for correct technique. Using your body weight (as opposed to pulling on a band or towel) requires nothing more than your body and a flat surface to perform the stretching. If you have questions, review these techniques with us or your physical therapist.

**Stretching needs to be performed daily and repetitively! I recommend 5-10 times per day.**

**I have been stretching, but don't think my motion is any better.**

Several studies suggest that not all patients will have improved motion with a stretching program. There are several reasons this may occur:

- The stretching program is not being performed appropriately. Stretching is technique dependent!
- Motion cannot improve due to structural block to motion such as a large bone spur at the front of the ankle.
- Some individuals are just built "tight" and may never gain significant flexibility (but a stretching program is still suggested initially!)

### **Surgical Management**

At times, a stretching program does not significantly improve flexibility. If there remains significant tightness, especially when combined with other foot and ankle problems, a quick outpatient surgical procedure is available to improve motion.

### **Contact us:**

If you have questions regarding lower extremity pain, contact us to schedule an appointment.



## ACHILLES STRETCHING

### Gastrocnemius stretch:

- 1) Knee absolutely must be completely straight (bending the knee relaxes the muscle therefore it will not stretch).
- 2) Back heel remains on the ground (this is the side you are stretching).
- 3) Front knee bent, pelvis pointed straight ahead, lumbar spine straight upright
- 4) You should feel the stretch along the achilles and into the inner aspect of the calf

### Soleus/Achilles/Ankle stretch:

- 1) Bend back knee and drive the kneecap downward (imagine there is a rope pulling the kneecap down into the ground directly below it)
- 2) Back heel remains on the ground (this is the one you are stretching)
- 3) You should feel the stretch at the back of the ankle



For both stretches make sure the back foot (the one you are stretching is pointed straight ahead as depicted on the left. Do not let your foot rotate out as depicted on the right or the stretch will not be effective

